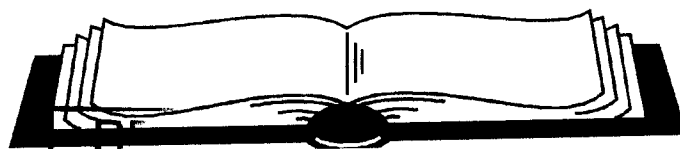


NEW JERSEY

1999-2000

Guidelines and
Application

ORIGINAL



NOV 22 1999

N.J. DEPT OF EDUCATION
WARREN COUNTY OFFICE

BEST PRACTICES

Deadline for Application to County Office:
NOVEMBER 22, 1999

Category	Professional Development	(Application is limited to one category. See page 3 for details.)
Practice Name	P.L.A.T.O. (Planning Alternatives To Observations)	
Number of Schools with Practice	4	(If more than one school or district, read and complete information on page 2.)

County	Warren
District (Proper Name)	Hackettstown School District
District Address	315 Washington St. street/p. o. box Hackettstown 07840 city zip code
District Telephone	908-850-6500 Fax 908-850-4985 E-mail: rlamonte@hackettstown.org
Chief School Administrator	Dr. Rosalie Lamonte <i>Dr. William Block</i>
Nominated School #1 (Proper Name)	Hackettstown Middle School
School Address	500 Washington St. street/p. o. box Hackettstown 07840 city zip code
School Telephone	908-852-8554 Fax 908-850-6544 E-mail: dosmun@hackettstown.org
School Principal	David S. Osmun
Program Developer(s)	Frank G. Joseph, David S. Osmun
Chief School Administrator's or Charter School Lead Person's Signature	<i>Rosalie S. Lamonte</i>

Typed name

FOR USE BY COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS ONLY

Approved: ☒ Yes ☐ No County Superintendent's Signature*W.D. N.K.*

NEW JERSEY STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEW JERSEY BEST PRACTICES INFORMATION FOR ADDITIONAL SCHOOL(S)/DISTRICT(S)

If the nominated practice is conducted in more than one school, complete the information below for one to three additional school(s). If the nominated practice is conducted in more than four schools, copy this page and complete the information for all schools. If the nominated practice is included in more than one district, copy the cover page, complete the information for the additional district(s) and number the additional district(s) as District #2, District #3, etc. in the District (Proper Name) column.

Nominated School #2 (Proper Name)		Hatchery Hill School	
School Address	Fifth Avenue		
	Street/P.O. Box		07840
	Hackettstown		zip code
City			
School Telephone	908-852-8550 FAX: 908-850-1286 E-mail: asheninger@hackettstown.org		
School Principal	Arthur Sheninger		
Program Developers	Frank G. Joseph, David S. Osmun		
Nominated School #3 (Proper Name)		Willow Grove School	
School Address	601 Willow Grove St.		
	Street/P.O. Box		07840
	Hackettstown		zip code
City			
School Telephone	908-852-2805 FAX: 908-852-7431 E-mail: jsarcone@hackettstown.org		
School Principal	John Sarcone		
Program Developers	Frank G. Joseph, David S. Osmun		
Nominated School #4 (Proper Name)		Hackettstown High School	
School Address	Warren St.		
	Street/P.O. Box		07840
	Hackettstown		zip code
City			
School Telephone	908-852-8150 FAX: 908-852-6214 E-mail: wcashill@hackettstown.org		
School Principal	William Cashill		
Program Developers	Frank G. Joseph, David S. Osmun		

BEST PRACTICES 1999-2000 APPLICATION

Application Requirements:

RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS. No reference should be made to the names of the district or the school(s). Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in referring to the applicant in responding to the statements.

USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable) and 4 and THE NUMBER OF LINES SPECIFIED FOR RESPONSES to the statements. Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.

Application must be **keyboared on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Ten-point or larger computer font or twelve-pitch or larger typewriter font must be used.** (This sentence is in ten-point.)

KEYBOARED RESPONSES to the statements below must be **no more than a total of three pages.**

Keyboard the statement followed by the response. Format your response to the number of lines specified.

The information on page 4 and the keyboarded responses to statements must be printed or copied on **one side of the page.** The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be printed or copied on **one side of the page.** Staple pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) and 4 and the keyboarded responses together.

The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.

The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by November 22, 1999, with the Itemized List of District Applications form. Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH THE PROCEDURES FOR SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION MAY RESULT IN THE ELIMINATION OF THE APPLICATION..

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:		
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name P.L.A.T.O. (Planning Alternatives To Observations) _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Elementary School	PreK - 4 _____	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Middle School	5 - 8 _____	Number of Schools with Practice 4 _____
Junior High School		Number of Districts with Practice 1 _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High School	9 - 12 _____	
Other: _____		

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual Education and Diversity	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support/Guidance	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages
<input type="checkbox"/> and Counseling Programs	(family involvement and partnerships	
(services contributing to	with business, community and/or	
high student achievement.)	higher education.)	

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated. **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
2. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the *Core Curriculum Content* including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards** addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s). **(Maximum of 50 lines for response)**
3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. **(Maximum of 60 lines for response)**

*The May 1996 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's website at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>

1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative, how it promotes high student achievement and how it can be replicated.

The PLATO Initiative represents a comprehensive effort to improve teacher effectiveness and student achievement, principles which are consistent with the best available research and exemplary practice within the framework of professional development. PLATO stands for Planning Alternatives To Observations. It is another dimension of the district's comprehensive staff development program.

Simply put, PLATO is part of a two-year pilot Board policy allowing tenured staff members the option, if their supervisors mutually agree, to participate in either an action research project, a customized project, or a professional portfolio project as an alternative to an observation of classroom instruction. The program is based on the belief that schools in which all students and teachers learn and perform at high levels require many options for professional growth. The philosophy, in practice, implies that just as we want classrooms in which students can take advantage of a wide array of learning opportunities, we need staff development to be the same way. The mantra, "one size fits all," doesn't apply in our district. All tenured teachers in the district, with the cooperation of their supervisors, have the power to select and design their own programs for growth. We operate on the premise that teachers are committed to ideas they choose. PLATO is a plan that was created to increase collaboration among professional educators, while encouraging them to study, research, or implement promising practices. It was driven by the realization that teacher observations can prove unproductive for both supervisors and teachers, and that other, more viable alternatives to observations exist. It represented one more way we could reconcile the knowledge explosion of the past several years with an increasingly limited, yet traditional, institutional structure, "the observation," and its place in teacher evaluation.

Background: In our district the Instructional Council is established by an agreement between the Board and the local education association. Its composition includes teachers, administrators, and Board members. The purpose of the council is to study matters of concern and present results of discussions to the board and association.

During the 1997/1998 school year, the Council discussed the possibility of exploring a more collaborative and collegial-based model of supervision for tenured staff members. A subcommittee was formed and charged with the responsibility to identify alternatives to observations, create guidelines for those alternatives, and return with recommendations to the Council, and subsequently to the Board. In addition, this group would research the existing literature, investigate the legal implications of such changes, and consider revisions that might be needed in Board policy. Ultimately, the committee focused on three major alternatives to classroom observations:

The Professional Portfolio Option is a collection of work produced to demonstrate the knowledge and skills used in job performance that provides a means for reflecting on one's own work;

The Customized Project Option incorporates a large variety of applications and allows the flexibility to work on curricular, co-curricular, instructional, or community relations type projects that enhance or contribute to the development of any segment of the learning community;

The Action Research Option allows for the design and testing of a focus question in the learning community.

The guidelines for each option require the teacher to develop objectives, state the rationale, detail the available resources, timeline, and relevant background information, and submit ideas on how the project could be shared. It also asks for reflections on the impact the project might have on either student/professional growth or the school/community program. The PLATO Initiative has the following objectives:

- Promoting differentiated staff supervision by creating alternatives to classroom observations;

- Providing teachers with a sense of their own ability to identify needs, and create lessons and units that are responsive to state and local standards, while encouraging them to research solutions to problems;

- Promoting authentic teacher leadership by enabling staff to self-direct their professional development and share the results of their efforts with colleagues;

- Encouraging the sharing of work in professional communities; and

- Promoting the orchestration of efforts to improve student achievement by requiring teachers and supervisors to work closely together, articulating standards and objectives they expect students to meet.

PLATO is easily replicated in other districts. At a county-wide inservice, members of our district staff who had helped develop the pilot, conducted a workshop explaining the PLATO Initiative, and provided implementation assistance to staff of four other districts in attendance. A booklet on PLATO's essential elements was distributed, and presenters indicated their willingness to provide consultation and continued assistance. Furthermore, a public presentation was made at a Board of Education meeting during which various PLATO projects were highlighted. Due to the fact that a key aspect of PLATO is to help identify avenues for potential publication and sharing, this practice is easily replicated.

2. **Describe the educational needs of the students that the practice addresses and how they were identified. List the Core Curriculum Content including the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses the standard(s).**

Because every tenured teacher in the district has the potential to participate in the PLATO Initiative, a tremendous population of students can be involved, and an extensive array of student needs at all grade levels can be addressed. The PLATO Initiative has affected students in programs for the gifted and talented, special education, basic skills, and regular education students. This is evidenced from the broad range of "Customized Projects" undertaken in 1998-99, such as:

K – 4 SPECIAL EDUCATION	THE USE OF SPEECH RECOGNITION SOFTWARE FOR AN ELEMENTARY STUDENT WITH DYSGRAPHIA
GRADE 4 INTEGRATED LANG. ARTS	THE ARTS CONNECTION
GRADE 4 INTEGRATED LANG. ARTS	FOURTH GRADERS LEAD PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES
5 – 8 SPECIAL EDUCATION	SEEDS OF FRIENDSHIP: AN INTERGENERATIONAL APPROACH
GRADE 5 SOCIAL STUDIES	TRICK OR TREAT SAFETY PROJECT WITH 5 TH GRADERS
GRADE 5 SCIENCE	INSTRUCTING PRESCHOOLERS
GRADE 6 SOCIAL STUDIES	I ATE AN INVERTEBRATE *
GRADE 6 SOCIAL STUDIES	MULTI-DISCIPLINARY MEDIEVAL TRADE FAIR *
GRADE 7 INTEGRATED LANG. ARTS	MULTICULTURAL/MULTIDISCIPLINARY UNIT ON THE THEME OF "WHO IS AN AMERICAN?"
9 – 12 SPECIAL EDUCATION	MOTIVATING THE RELUCTANT LEARNER
	INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING UNIT OF PRESCHOOL MATHEMATICS
GRADE 11 SCIENCE	HONORS CHEMISTRY LABS IN MICROSCALE

(*State Best Practices recipients in 1998/99.)

These projects address Cross Content Readiness Standards such as:

- Standard # 3 – All students will use critical thinking, decision making, and problem solving skills;
- Standard # 4 – All students will demonstrate self-management skills;
- Standard # 5 – All students will apply safety principles.

They also address selected Core Curriculum Standards in the areas of Social Studies, Science, Language Arts, Math, and Visual and Performing Arts. For example, the Grade 5 "I Ate an Invertebrate" project addresses Language Arts and Math Core Curriculum Standards as well as these in Science:

- 5.4 – All students will develop an understanding of technology as an application of scientific principles;
- 5.5 – All students will integrate mathematics as a tool for problem solving in science, and as a means of expressing and/or modeling scientific theories;
- 5.6 – All students will gain an understanding of the structure, characteristics, and basic needs of organisms;
- 5.7 – All students will investigate the diversity of life.

One professional portfolio project based on measures from the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INSTASC) addressed elements of the state core curriculum by focusing on Language Arts and Cross Content Readiness Standards. Specifically, in Language Arts, the portfolio demonstrated that:

- 3.4 – All students will read, listen to, view, and respond to a diversity of materials and texts with comprehension and critical analysis;
- 3.5 – All students will view, understand, and use non-textual visual information and representations for critical comparison, analysis, and evaluation.

The beauty of PLATO is that it consistently encourages teachers to examine student learning and needs, and create initiatives that will address them. Core Curriculum Standards and Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards are at the center of this movement. As both teachers and supervisors recognize the need to realign the curriculum, PLATO speeds the process by providing the perfect opportunity for both to work collaboratively toward that realignment. Supervisors encourage each teacher undertaking a Customized Project, a Professional Portfolio Project, or an Action Research Project, to have several of their objectives reference the Core Curriculum Standards and/or the Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards adopted by the state. In this way, our district continues to move forward in aligning curriculum to implement standards across all disciplines and grade levels.

3. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met.

Assessment of the PLATO Initiative can be characterized as ongoing and cumulative in nature. It is stated that the benefits derived from this innovation include:

Giving staff members and supervisors the freedom to practice a "different" kind of professional relationship that promotes greater collegiality;

Empowering staff members to determine and develop an aspect of their professional experience that they and their supervisors deem important;

Enhancing the Professional Improvement Plan portion of the Annual Performance Report by placing the burden of improvement squarely where it belongs and where it is most likely to occur, on the educator; and,

Promoting independent self-evaluation and reflection.

Now in the second year of the Initiative (1999-2000), this fall the Instructional Council will revisit PLATO's objectives. It is anticipated that the Council will recommend that PLATO move from pilot status to a permanent part of Board policy. At the end of last year, a survey was distributed and collected from participants, which clearly revealed PLATO's success.

For recordkeeping on an individual basis, the district's standard Performance Report form (with modifications for each PLATO option) is used. The steps for initiating a PLATO option are as follows:

- ✓ Step 1: The teacher completes one of the three performance report forms (Action Research, Customized Project, or Professional Portfolio) with input from the supervisor. For the initial phase of the process, only the top portion of the form is completed which includes Name, Goals, and Rationale.
- ✓ Step 2: The supervisor sends a copy of the Performance Report form to the superintendent for review. The supervisor and teacher retain their own copies. The superintendent contacts the supervisor if there are any concerns.
- ✓ Step 3: The teacher and supervisor decide on the project's timeline. They collaborate on a mid-point date and an ending date.
- ✓ Step 4: The teacher and the supervisor meet at the mid-point date to discuss and review the project, and to record their comments on the Performance Report form. This step may be repeated if the teacher and supervisor choose to meet more often.
- ✓ Step 5: The teacher and supervisor meet to review the final project. Again, each one dates and records comments on the same Performance Report form. Copies of the final form are then distributed to the superintendent, teacher, and supervisor. A copy is also placed in the teacher's personnel file.

Utilizing an open-ended format, the Performance Report requires that a teacher record comments after reflecting upon the content and process of his/her work. As a veteran teaching staff, we have come to believe that self-reliance is the key to enduring teacher progress, and that self-reliance is having the authority to investigate questions of individual relevance, followed by time for reflection and sharing. There is a dependence on informal consultation and feedback with the supervisor that is built into PLATO to complement the mandatory reviews. These contacts are a critical component of PLATO and serve to strengthen the relationship of the teacher and supervisor, thereby enhancing the assessment process. Because each and every PLATO option requires consideration of "ways the project can enhance student knowledge or improve services offered by the district," teachers are encouraged to include a variety of assessment strategies like surveys, rubrics, culminating activities, examinations, creation of products, observations, and student self-reflections.

In sum, through PLATO, we have demonstrated our support for research, portfolios, and creative projects. Adopting PLATO illustrates that we recognize that sustained teacher learning is essential if our schools are to be successful in holding all students accountable to the high standards expected by the state of New Jersey. It clearly recognizes that teaching is highly complex work that requires specialized skills, knowledge of academic disciplines, the ability to design interesting and challenging lessons for an increasingly diverse student population, and the capacity to understand and apply educational research. Such complexity is not easily revealed in a forty-minute observation. We are encouraging learning experiences for our staff that go far beyond typical observations. As teachers become experts via their PLATO projects, we believe that such expertise becomes the single most important factor that ultimately impacts on student achievement.